



The Hidden Treasure of Llico: The Chilean Dolphin (*Cephalorhynchus eutropia*)

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Report 1

Past

The Chilean dolphin (*Cephalorhynchus eutropia*) is a small and shy cetacean endemic to the Chilean coast. Its distribution goes from Cape Horn to Valparaíso, inhabiting shallow and protected shores. Not much is known about this little dolphin but it was estimated that there were only more than 2,000 individuals, making its conservation an important task.

However, in a small coastal town known as Llico, this dolphin has its special place. Every habitant from Llico sees and knows the “toninas”, name given to *C. eutropia* by the residents of the town. This name is given to another cetacean and it shows how the population still has a long road ahead to get to know this animal.

It is said that in the past, *C. eutropia* was really abundant and interactive with humans but the effect of antropogenic activities such as ship sounds, salmon farms and fishing has affected the behaviour of this dolphin. Not only that, but the hunt for Chilean dolphins in the past was a common activity, this was done to generate crustacean bait.

Luckily, the hunt of *C. eutropia* has become illegal and people have been learning more about this specie. But the disinformation of the citizens of Chile is still rampant. More research and education on this dolphin is needed to conserve it.

Nevertheless, the misinformation didn't stop them from loving the dolphins. With every single person we talked to the amount of stories on these cetaceans was vast. Soledad Carvallo (president of the neighbour board and artisan) even opened up with such a personal story that almost brought me to tears. It showed such a personal connection between a person and an animal. The story went about how dolphins jumped and almost waved when his father's funeral was happening. Due to the strong connection between his father and the “toninas”, they felt their father's presence in those dolphins. In Llico, the love for nature is palpable and the want for understanding it is even bigger.

The love for the Chilean dolphin and the need of information from the villagers was what inspired Camila Calderón-Quirgas and Andrea Cisterna Concha to start a project about this species.



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